Pilgrimage, mobile behaviours and the creation of religious place in early Roman Latium

Book Section

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Introduction

A little over a decade ago, it was claimed that pilgrimage 'seems to play a smaller part in Roman religion than in Greek' (Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 24). Since then, studies of ancient pilgrimage have continued to expand and develop in new directions, broadening our knowledge of particular instances of pilgrimage, the locations involved, the journeys undertaken by individuals and groups, and the types of evidence that can be used to identify and assess these.[1] Nevertheless, with very few exceptions, there remains one constant within these studies: the foregrounding of sources, contexts, sites, communities, activities, and experiences which relate primarily to the Greek world, the eastern Mediterranean or Late Antiquity.[2] This situation has (unintentionally) perpetuated the conclusion reached by Elsner and Rutherford that the absence of directly comparable evidence for pilgrimage activities by Roman individuals or communities, in Italy and the western Mediterranean, must therefore mean that this type of behaviour was simply a less important aspect of religious practice and identity. This state of affairs is made abundantly clear, for example, by an excellent recent volume focused on the archaeological evidence for pilgrimage across the ancient Mediterranean, which features eleven chapters dedicated to Near Eastern, Greek and Late Antique pilgrimage, but only two which examine western Roman contexts.[3]

The primary reasons behind the absence of sustained work on pilgrimage in Republican and Imperial period Italy and the western Roman world can be identified as equal parts methodological (concerning the way in which 'pilgrimage' is defined, typologised and subsequently identified), and evidential (a distinct lack of epigraphic and textual sources providing the same level of detailed information available for other periods and places).[4] This chapter seeks to address these problems by offering an alternative methodology for the study of pilgrimage in early Roman Italy. Rather than attempting to identify a new and coherent suite of textual or material sources, locations, or motives that can then be labelled as 'evidence for Roman pilgrimage', I begin instead by asking how an exploration of mobility – one of the typical behaviours that characterises pilgrimage – might offer a lens through which to re-evaluate what is already known about the religious practices of this period and region.

Put another way, rather than attempting to isolate pilgrimage as an activity that was special or otherwise separate from ordinary religious practices, what happens if we assume that essential pilgrimage behaviours were deeply embedded within traditional religious activities? How might this make it possible to better understand the complexities of Roman religious knowledge and experience? To achieve this, the chapter focuses particularly on questions concerning mobility and its relationship with the production, nature, and role of religious place, investigating the archaeological and textual evidence associated with two sacred sites in the Latium region of Italy: the well-known sanctuary dedicated to Diana Nemorensis near Aricia, and a much less well-known natural cave and spring at Pantanacci, Lanuvium. These examples demonstrate that foregrounding concepts of mobility and place, rather than seeking pilgrimage 'sites', can provide a means through which to address assumptions about the practice, prevalence, and significance of pilgrimage behaviours in early Roman Italy.

Towards a definition of ancient pilgrimage

Any study of pilgrimage, past or present, faces the problem of how to define the activity which lies at its heart. Space constraints prevent a comprehensive overview of such a vast multidisciplinary field here but, broadly speaking, as a subject which crosses both the humanities and social sciences, definitions of pilgrimage are typically characterised by the concerns of the discipline that produces or uses them. Thus, geographers have tended to emphasise the spatial and mobility aspects of the journeys, locations and experiences involved in pilgrimage, anthropologists and sociologists have stressed the social aspects of community building and identity creation through the performance of ritual activities, as well as its connection with secular forms of travel and tourism, sometimes overlapping with theological and religious studies approaches which have drawn attention to the spiritual motivations or consequences of sacred journeys and sites.[5] The most influential, if now much critiqued, work on pilgrimage remains that of Victor Turner, who advocated the concepts of *communitas* and liminality, anti-structure, and the pitching together of people taken out of their normal social world, resulting in new collective bonds.[6] Even if it has largely been reduced to a critical backboard against which to bounce revised concepts, Turner's work continues to influence pilgrimage studies. Richard Scriven (2014, 258), for example, has noted that 'core ideas around liminality and the solidarity among participants still resonate' within geographical and mobilities scholarship. Consequently, although Turner's theories are concerned less with the implications of pilgrimage for understandings of the production and role of religious place than they are with understanding social dynamics more broadly, the

idea that pilgrimage might produce a particular state of being or understanding of the world endures as an undercurrent to the discussion below.

Studies of ancient pilgrimage have tended to be guided primarily by the availability of suitable evidence, especially texts and inscriptions which describe activities and ascribe to them motivations and understandings that align with a flexible definition of pilgrimage, such as that put forward by Ian Rutherford (2012, 5325): 'a journey of unusual length to a sacred place for a religious reason.' Indeed, as Jaś Elsner and Ian Rutherford pointed out, ancient pilgrimage is very difficult to define, and Philip Kiernan has bemoaned the extent to which the term is applied 'remarkably casually' to archaeological evidence.[7] This is a circumstance that is complicated further by the fact that individual pieces of scholarship on ancient pilgrimage are also disposed towards asking specific questions about community, identity, the nature of sacred sites, spiritual transformation and enlightenment that, by necessity, draw unevenly upon the wider multidisciplinary field of pilgrimage studies described above. The overarching 'pick and mix' picture that emerges of ancient pilgrimage limits the practical application of the term for explaining cross-cultural or cross-period phenomena in a meaningful way, resulting instead in the production of region- or period-specific accounts and typologies. Recent work has drawn critical attention to these methodological problems, and has to some extent side-stepped the difficulties of drawing together cross-disciplinary methods, theories and strands of research into a single coherent definition either by promoting a very loose understanding of the term or, as already noted, by continuing to develop context- or disciplinary-specific understandings that target a particular collection of material or speak to a particular set of concerns.[8] On the evidential front, Jaś Elsner (2017, 267–68) has suggested that it is in fact impossible to study pilgrimage without texts, highlighting the dangers of inferring 'ritual, let alone pilgrimage, from any given artefact or space,' and arguing that the narrative constructed and expressed in written form by participants is the only guaranteed way of avoiding what he calls 'speculative whimsy' and ensuring a secure identification of an act of pilgrimage. Whilst he does note that rejecting pilgrimage entirely as an interpretation for material culture would be reductive, he remains committed to the idea of pilgrimage as 'a *post-eventum* explanatory narrative' (Elsner 2017, 270). In contrast, this chapter demonstrates that archaeological evidence can have a significant role to play in discourses surrounding the role of pilgrimage behaviours within ancient religious practices and understandings, if pilgrimage is thought of as comprising particular forms of behaviour and not just post hoc rationalisation.

Amongst the other reasons supplied by Elsner and Rutherford for why scholars of antiquity have tended to shy away from investigating pilgrimage as a form of sacred travel are the term's overtly Christianizing overtones.[9] This problem is neatly demonstrated by a description of Roman-period pilgrimage given in a recent work:

> '*Like those of Christian pilgrims*, the journeys were mostly made on foot, *covering twenty to thirty kilometres per day*. The pilgrims certainly carried part of their nourishment with them while a part *could have* been obtained from farmers or shops. Some nights were spent in *places of worship and hospices* that offered shelter, food and sometimes baths. Other nights were *probably* passed in relay stations, in inns or with local inhabitants, but *presumably* very few under the stars since there was a real fear of wild animals, outlaws and ghosts. We can *only speculate* about the different states and *ritual practices that may have punctuated these voyages*, but it is *probable* that by repeatedly stopping at *consecrated places* found along the way to *the large and important sanctuaries* served as a psychological preparation for the pilgrims' (Luginbühl 2015, 54–55, emphasis added).

From the direct parallel made by its opening words, to its mention of hospices and large sanctuaries, as well as its extensive reliance on adverbs, this passage is replete with Christianizing and other assumptions, the many gaps in existing knowledge readily filled by comparison with later forms of pilgrimage. On the other hand, however, it also conveniently encapsulates quite how little is known about Roman practices and experiences of pilgrimage. Perhaps, then, if it is so difficult to identify and define we should consider abandoning any attempt to use pilgrimage as a framework for investigations of Roman religious practice and performance. Doing so, however, brings its own problems: choosing *not* to explore Roman period religious activities and behaviours through the lens of pilgrimage would be tantamount to a tacit acknowledgement that this moment in time and space was, in one way or another, unusual for a marked *insignificance* of pilgrimage or pilgrimage-like activities, when evidence certainly indicates such an extreme conclusion to be false. Instead, there is an urgent need to adopt a new approach which makes it possible to assess the relative value of this form of behaviour to Roman individuals and communities.

Work already exists which can help with this. Instead of focusing purely on contexts – the legacy of what might be described as the 'who, what, when, where, and why' typology of

around 20 types (and sub-types) of ancient pilgrimage set out by Elsner and Rutherford – Joy McCorriston has established five behavioural criteria for identifying ancient pilgrimage.[10] She describes pilgrimage as 'a constellation of characteristics including mobility, an affirmation of social identity and inscription of belonging, material and economic exchanges, punctuated rather than habitual participation, and dramatic rites' (McCorriston 2017, 11). Although under certain circumstances the attributes that she highlights might be seen to characterise *any* form of ancient religious behaviour, such as performing a sacrifice or making a votive dedication, McCorriston's model, which includes an emphasis on mobility and time, nevertheless provides a useful way of breaking down the fundamental elements of pilgrimage into a set of activities or outcomes that might vary in terms of their relevance or significance in different settings or on different occasions. As Richard Scriven (2014, 251) has similarly argued, 'the study of pilgrimage can be cultivated in considering how movements, beliefs and embodied practices function individually and together in the creation of pilgrims and pilgrimage places.' Rather than attempting to define, identify, and evaluate 'Roman pilgrimage' as a discrete activity, this chapter builds on Scriven's words and McCorriston's approach by using the features and behaviours commonly associated with pilgrimage – especially mobility – to prompt an investigation of what people were actually doing in the past, not what traditional models of pilgrimage suggest they ought to have been doing. From this perspective more nuanced questions can be asked about the significance and consequences of those behaviours for understanding ancient religious practice as a lived experience.[11]

Producing religious place in Republican Italy

Joy McCorriston (2017, 12–13) points out the significance of forms of mobility as a particular characteristic of pilgrimage when she states that 'Pilgrimage movement is distinct from other journeys because of its socially-constituting aspects outside of daily practice – pilgrims may be habitually sedentary, mobile, or both, but their interaction is in-habitual.' She goes on to stress the importance of studying the 'localities where pilgrimage has left its mark,' or in other words archaeological evidence that can attest to 'episodic gatherings' (McCorriston 2017, 13). The corollary of recognising mobility as a key characteristic of pilgrimage is, therefore, the need to identify and understand its relationship with place. But, as Alan Morinis (1992, 4) reminds us, the places implicated in acts of pilgrimage might be both tangible and intangible:

> 'At its most conventional, the end of the pilgrimage is an actual shrine located at some fixed geographical point. … One who journeys to a place of importance to himself alone may also be a pilgrim. The allegorical pilgrimage seeks out a place not located in the geographical sphere. Some sacred journeys are wanderings that have no fixed goal; the pilgrimage here is the search for an unknown or hidden goal.'

Pilgrimage places in Roman Italy have usually been assumed to be highly tangible, even heavily monumental, fixed geographical points, as Elsner and Rutherford's (2005, 24) qualification of their comments about the reduced role of pilgrimage in Roman religion demonstrate:

> 'many centres for pilgrimage are known: the official sanctuaries of the Alban Mount, locale for the Feriae Latinae and Lavinium; other Latin centres were Lake Nemi, where there was a yearly festival of Diana; Fregellae, on the border between Samnite and Latin territory where there was a cult of Neptune and Aesculapius; and the grove of Helernus (Alernus) near the mouth of the Tiber.'

These 'centres for pilgrimage' (one of which is explored in more detail below) appear to have been identified primarily on the basis of their size or monumentality and the presence of epigraphy and references in written sources to large, periodic, sometimes political, gatherings, thus aligning them with the Panhellenic sanctuaries that dominate the rest of their typology. However, once pilgrimage is defined as a set of behaviours rather than physical features, one need only observe the presence in the wider archaeological record of many other sites with sacred connotations to which people in Italy journeyed on a periodic basis, especially during the Republic. Vast quantities of votive offerings, for example, have been recovered from 'ordinary' monumentalised and non-monumentalised urban, extra-urban and rural sanctuaries across the landscape of central Italy, providing ample evidence for people travelling to locations near and far for the performance of particular personal and communal ritual activities and acts of exchange.[12] From the third to first century BCE, votive deposits at these sites are dominated by terracotta anatomical votives, commonly connected with requests for healing, well-being, fertility, good fortune and other forms of divine protection.[13] These objects number into the tens, hundreds, sometimes thousands, even at the smallest rural sanctuaries, each one connected with an episodic individual request or gesture of thanksgiving. In addition, several sites in Republican Latium housed oracles, including the

great terraced sanctuaries at Praeneste (Palestrina), Tarracina and Gabii.[14] Oracles such as these were surely consulted by visitors who travelled, in potentially impromptu ways, from both the local urban community and further afield. Indeed, despite Ian Rutherford's suggestion cited above that pilgrimage involved 'a journey of unusual length', there is no reason at all to assume that within early Roman Italy visiting any sacred site entailed or necessitated long-distance travel: the countryside was littered with shrines, sacred springs, caves, and groves, as well as larger monumentalised sanctuaries, which provided equal levels of access to the divine, and which served the needs of individual and community alike.[15] This type of sacred landscape, produced and sustained by largely localised forms of mobility, is known from other historical contexts which, whilst not directly comparable in terms of religious practice, are at least suggestive of its potential effects. In late medieval England, for example, 'for many pilgrims of the time, going on pilgrimage was less like launching on a journey to the ends of the earth and more like going to the local market. Shrines mapped the familiar as much as they were signposts to the other world' Coleman and Eade 2004, 13 paraphrasing Duffy 2002, 165). This compels a rethink of the landscape of pilgrimage for Republican Italy, challenging the necessity of identifying evidence for 'major centres', and potentially long journeys, in order to securely attest to the practice of pilgrimage behaviour.

Not enough is known about most Republican sacred sites to establish how frequently or regularly visits were made to them, but they appear to have combined both habitual and more periodic events. A bronze tablet documenting the formal religious calendar of a grove dedicated to Ceres at Agnone near Pietrabbondante (Samnium) suggests that we should imagine visits to sanctuary sites taking a range of individual and communal forms throughout the year.[16] Listing 15 annual ceremonies, the tablet establishes that although the local elite were responsible for the maintenance of the grove and the regular performance of appropriate rites, there were also special festival days that must have attracted 'changing groups of worshippers, not all of whom will necessarily have come from the strictly local remit' Scopacasa 2014, 79). On certain occasions in the annual cycle, then, mobility was responsible for creating more or less substantial gatherings of transient worshippers, and bringing about a reconfiguration of the religious community at Agnone, perhaps also bringing with it an altered phenomenological experience of the activities performed there and of the grove itself or, that is, its associated sense of place.[17] Indeed, although 'place' has traditionally been viewed as static, and as a location in which movement is effectively paused, this understanding has been challenged by scholarship in both the social sciences and archaeology

which argues that place is dynamic and 'constantly in the process of becoming.'[18] From this standpoint, rather than existing as a fixed point in space – i.e. a location, locale or site – place is better understood as an ephemeral experience that results from a dynamic combination of the material attributes of a location, the bodies which animate it and the moment in time at which they do so. In other words, the 'weaving together of moving bodies and their sensory engagement with the world at particular moments in time actively produces place that is temporally-specific, which in turn contributes to the creation of certain kinds of personal knowledge and identities' (Graham 2018, p.3).[19] Indeed, for ancient cult contexts, Peter Biehl (2007, 178) has stressed how sacred places 'not only exist as material entities, they also happen. They are continuously being made and remade, and are always changing.' That places 'happen' is an important observation in the context of ancient pilgrimage, since it draws attention to the temporal aspects of place, a temporality that is brought about principally by human movement to and from a location. The people who come to be present at that location at any one time comprise a unique gathering of temporally specific bodies and minds experiencing the material nature of that location and engaging in ritual performances in highly personal sensory and embodied ways. The ultimate product of this 'sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment' (Howes 2005, 7), and the temporal and spatial experiences it involves, is a sense of place that belongs to that moment and to those participants only. Subsequent gatherings or events at the same location, however similar in form, will always produce further singular senses of place, either because the key agents (e.g. human bodies and minds in action, moment in time) are different, or have changed as a consequence of earlier experiences, or because they combine in subtly different ways.[20] Accordingly, place can be conceived of as an unrepeatable 'time-space event' and 'a gathering that brings together people and things in the here and now' (Moser and Feldman 2014, 6).[21] The potential connection between the production of religious place and the mobile behaviours central to pilgrimage could not be clearer.

These observations, together with the example of Agnone, suggest that the traditional starting point in the search for 'places of pilgrimage' in Republican Italy may, in fact, be fundamentally flawed. Instead of seeking distinctive sites characterised by a collection of similar buildings or monumental features, which were visited periodically by large numbers of people travelling long distances, or which display epigraphic evidence for communal dedications, our approach to Roman places of pilgrimage might profitably be transformed by an assessment of how pilgrimage behaviours and related activities, operating at a range of

different scales, might in themselves produce less tangible, but no less significant, religious places. New questions thus begin to emerge about the significance of visits to the same location by different people not necessarily involving the same experience or understanding of place. An equality of experience cannot be assumed in cases such as Agnone, where festival days swelled the 'ordinary' community, or at sites such as Praeneste where it is likely that both ad hoc oracular and votive activities took place alongside the more regular communal worship of the primary deity. Although these were not mutually exclusive categories of activity or groups of people, acknowledging their role in the active production of potentially dissimilar forms of religious place at one location makes it possible to better understand the consequences of pilgrimage as a kinetic activity, whilst also removing the need to seek major 'centres'. Instead we might think about how this set of kinaesthetic behaviours may have contributed more widely to the production of distinctively Roman forms of religious knowledge. To explore this in practice, the rest of this chapter examines the evidence from two locations in early Roman Latium, at both of which can be distinguished at least two separate experiences of place brought about as a result of mobile behaviours. Together these suggest that visiting sacred locations involved producing, experiencing, and engaging with a different religious place each time, even if the geospatial location in which they occurred remained essentially the same.

Celebrating the cult of Diana Nemorensis

The sanctuary dedicated to Diana Nemorensis was located in an isolated position on the shore of Lake Nemi (also referred to as *speculum Dianae,* Mirror of Diana), situated in a volcanic crater approximately 25 kilometres south east of Rome. Probably under the jurisdiction of the nearby urban community of Aricia, the site originally comprised a *lucus* (a clearing in a *nemus*, sacred wood) that was dedicated to Diana, and also served as a meeting point for the confederation of communities known as the Latin League, until its defeat in 338 BCE.[22] The sanctuary is most well-known for its connection with the *rex Nemorensis*, an unusual priestly office held by an escaped slave who ritually murdered his predecessor, which was made (in)famous by James Frazer's pioneering anthropological study *The Golden Bough* (1890). The existence and role of the *rex* is not discussed here, in part because so little is certain about whether it continued in anything other than a symbolic form, but also because its uniqueness offers little of relevance to a study of the significance of mobile pilgrimage behaviours within the region more broadly. The site of the sanctuary was first investigated in the mid-seventeenth century, before being excavated in a piecemeal way in 1885 by Sir John

Savile, who identified a rectangular structure, set to one side of an arcaded precinct and portico, as a temple building, as well as an imperial period theatre, baths and granary complex.[23] More than 400 votive offerings and several sculptures were recovered during these excavations, the former having been cleared away during antiquity from their original place within the temple for deposition in a deep pit in the southern corner of the precinct, along with coins and burnt material assumed to originate from sacrificial fires.[24] These artefacts, many of which are now housed in Nottingham Castle Museum, comprise bronze and terracotta votive figurines – including statuettes of Diana and other deities, as well as so-called Tanagra figures – and terracotta anatomical and miniature temple models, all dating primarily to the third or second century BCE.[25]

More recent excavations have clarified the building phases of the temple, which was constructed on a site that had been used for cult activities from at least the Archaic period, with the first formalised temple structure – oriented towards the lake – constructed between the end of the fourth and the start of the third century BCE.[26] This underwent further monumentalisation during the second half of the second century BCE, when a small circular shrine was added and the orientation of the temple was altered in order to create a transverse cella, before further enlargement took place a century later.[27] Excavation also revealed a series of additional structures, dating between the late second century BCE and the second century CE, on the terrace above the temple precinct, including a late Republican nymphaeum.[28] The terrace also revealed evidence for a hoard of middle Bronze Age axes, to the east of which were found late Bronze Age ceramics and carbonised materials that appear to have demarcated an area intentionally left free of structures, which the excavators suggest was perhaps memorialised as the site of the original *lucus*.[29] Immediately to the south of the proposed *lucus* there once stood a small square structure which, Giuseppina Ghini and Francesca Diosono propose, might have protected the sacred tree, the removal of a branch from which gave a runaway slave the right to challenge the *rex Nemorensis*.[30] In architectural terms these remains offer little to facilitate a secure reconstruction of the performance of ritual activities or movements around the sanctuary (the location of an altar, for example, remains unknown). However, when combined with written sources describing events associated with the celebration of the festival of Diana Nemorensis, it is possible to identify at least two types of periodic ritual activity that people might choose to travel to the site in order to participate in.

Sources from the Augustan period describe the performance of a custom established in a much earlier period: in order to celebrate the annual festival of Diana each August, worshippers made their way en masse along the Via Appia from Rome in what appears to have been a nocturnal torch lit procession (this is probably the event which, combined with the sanctuary's role in the Latin League, led Elsner and Rutherford to include it in their list of 'centres of pilgrimage' in Roman era Italy, see above). These descriptions are worth citing at length because they provide an evocative insight into both the nature of the procession, the landscape and atmosphere through which its participants moved, and the sensory aspects of the religious place which consequently emerged from this act of mobility:

> 'It is the season when the most scorching region of the heavens takes over the land and the keen dog-star Sirius, so often struck by Hyperion's sun, burns the gasping fields. Now is the day when Trivia's Arician grove, convenient for fugitive kings, grows smoky, and the lake, having guilty knowledge of Hippolytus, glitters with the reflection of a multitude of torches; Diana herself garlands the deserving hunting dogs and polishes the arrowheads and allows the wild animals to go in safety, and at virtuous hearths all Italy celebrates the Hecatean Ides.' (Statius *Silvae* 3.1.52–60, trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey and C.A. Parrott)

> 'I wish you would promenade here in all your leisure hours, Cynthia! But the world of men forbids me to trust you, when they see you hurrying with kindled torches to worship at the Arician grove and carrying lights for the goddess Trivia.' (Propertius 2.32.7–10, trans. G.P. Goold)

> 'In the Arician vale there is a lake begirt by shady woods and hallowed by religion from of old. Here Hippolytus lies hid, who by the reins of his steeds was rent in pieces: hence no horses enter that grove. The long fence is draped with hanging threads, and many a tablet there attests the merit of the goddess. Often doth a woman, whose prayer has been answered, carry from the City burning torches, while garlands wreathe her brows. The strong of hand and fleet of foot do there reign kings, and each is slain thereafter even as himself had slain. A pebbly brook flows down with fitful murmur; oft have I drunk of it, but in little sips.' (Ovid *Fasti* 3.263–74, trans. J.G. Frazer and G.P. Goold)

According to these sources, the participants who walked from Rome to Aricia in order to take part in the festival of Diana were predominantly women, and all three writers emphasise the

dramatic use of torches and their impact on the experience, Statius specifically drawing attention to the way in which the grove 'grows smoky, and the lake … glitters with the reflection of a multitude of torches.' There was only one route in and out of the crater, so after perhaps 3 or 4 hours of moderately paced walking, in order to reach the sanctuary itself this mobile group was compelled to leave the main road and follow another secondary basalt-paved route, moving over the south western edge of the crater and down towards the lake.[31] Here they made their way towards the main sanctuary structures, situated on a flat area of ground at the north eastern end of the lake, moving around its forested edge, walking through the darkened trees with the natural scents and sounds of the woodland evoking the wilderness over which Diana exercised control. Like all visitors to the sanctuary they therefore moved from a (partially) tamed world outside the crater to a largely wild one within, with the timing of the festival itself – taking place at the driest, warmest part of the year – perhaps contributing further to the production of a deeply sensory experience of a place distinct from that outside the crater, or in Rome itself.[32] Carin Green has suggested that the festival, which she assigns to the Ides of August, lasted three days, making it likely that participants stayed for several nights by the side of the lake, perhaps in temporary structures or tents.[33] Propertius (2.32.3–6) certainly complained about Cynthia going away from him for protracted periods on what appear to be comparable trips in order to participate in religious performances: 'Why, Cynthia, do you seek riddling oracles at Praeneste, why seek the walls of Aeaean Telegonus? Why so oft are you taken by your carriage to Herculean Tibur, why so oft by the Appian Way to Lanuvium?'

The sense of place produced and experienced by the gathering together of a large group of women, nocturnal celebrations, the garlanding of the grove and banishment of certain animals, and movement over varied terrain each time this celebration of Diana's annual festival occurred, was therefore generated by mobility. After all, it was mobility which actively brought together a discrete group of people, at a particular time, to perform religious rituals in relation to a specific location. Mobility was also responsible for sustaining that sense of place for a well-defined period only, since the subsequent departure of participants brought about both the scattering of its members and the dissolving of the temporary place their co-presence and actions had created. What can be identified here, then, is an example of the type of mobility behaviour commonly associated with pilgrimage – the periodic 'there and back again' movement of a discrete and changeable group of people – producing a distinct yet temporally specific sense of place that effectively dissipated along with the

departure of the agents which sustained it. It suggests that the real significance of pilgrimage movement might lie in the fact that it could produce religious places that were largely ephemeral, temporary and context-specific.

Being part of a mobile group that moved from one location to another was perhaps also significant for the way in which it shaped religious experiences and knowledge in other ways. Movement as part of a procession, for example, is something which, as Thierry Luginbühl (2015, 50) argues, could produce a sense of communal identity: 'the action of progressing together, as a coherent body, procures for the participants particular sensations and impressions, the sensation of being scrutinized or, more exactly, as being on display.' Moreover, Eftychia Stavrianopoulou (2015, 350) includes aspects of movement in her assessment of community building through participation in ritual performances when she writes:

> 'It is not the co-presence of participants and spectators that creates community, but rather the interplay between actors and spectators, between them and aesthetic elements (clothing, smell, music and song, group arrangement) or the particular space to be traversed that generate instances, which, in turn, evoke the creation or collapse of communities.'

Moving as part of a procession such as that from Rome to Lake Nemi, emphasized the role of the participants in creating the 'here and now-ness' not only of that community but, it can be argued, also of the place that they co-created and co-habited. Their shared experience produced a time-space event that was associated with *that* celebration of Diana only.

Nevertheless, people also travelled to Diana's sanctuary on the shores of Lake Nemi at other times and for other purposes, as attested by the large numbers of excavated votive offerings. These objects provide evidence for periodic visits by individuals with another specific goal in mind: making requests or gestures of thanksgiving connected with personal issues of healing, fertility, well-being and good fortune. Some of these objects may have been dedicated by the women who participated in the August festival celebrations, but the likelihood of votive activities comprising a core component of the summer rites is rendered unlikely by the comparatively short-lived nature of this behaviour and the apparent end of the practice of making such offerings after the second century BCE, with no evidence for the substitution of

terracotta objects with those of a different material form (e.g. inscriptions or dedicatory altars). The two activities therefore appear to have been largely separate. Votive dedicants were compelled to follow the same route from the Via Appia to the sanctuary as the women who were involved in the night-time procession, but they did so under different circumstances, perhaps alone or, in the case of those who sought help from the goddess for illness or impairment, as part of a smaller group of family or friends, and most probably during daylight hours.[34] These visits occurred in a more informal or spontaneous manner at numerous points throughout the year. Aside from seasonal or temporal variations in the natural landscape through which they travelled, these visiting petitioners of the goddess experienced the same material setting for their activities, but their act of mobility, their bodies and motivations, and the activities they performed on arrival at the sanctuary (and perhaps also on departure) involved the production of place that was unlike that of the festival celebrants.[35] In part this also resulted from the fact that, in contrast to the female-oriented torchlight procession and the rites associated with the festival of Diana, the votive offerings indicate that her assistance could be sought by both male and female petitioners. It might be expected that a cult of Diana (considered to provide protection in childbirth), especially one with such a specifically female-oriented festival, would attract many dedications of wombs, breasts, nursing figures, swaddled infants and other items indicative of concerns related to female fertility, childbirth, motherhood and infant health. This is not the case at Nemi, where although some offerings of this type are present, and large quantities of female figurines are known, no swaddled babies or breasts have been recorded and there are only two uteri in the Nottingham collection.[36] There is no evidence that the votive petitioners were exclusively women and instead they appear to have been drawn from a wider cross-section of society than the participants in the annual festival. It can therefore be suggested that there were at least two different types of 'religious community' making use of the sanctuary at Nemi, each producing a sense of place that embodied their own particular behaviours, activities and understandings. It does not appear, however, that these different communities, discourses or experiences of place were in active competition, as scholars of pilgrimage in modern contexts have claimed for other 'contested' locations at which different worldviews and agendas can be seen to conflict.[37]

In sum, focusing on mobility as a form of religious behaviour reveals that it was the temporality of the type of 'there and back again' movement traditionally associated with pilgrimage that was fundamental to the production of multiple senses of religious place at the

sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis. Here, religious place was produced *by* pilgrimage behaviours, not for them. The geospatial location associated with the cult of Diana, off the beaten track of the main road system and not directly on the way to anywhere else, certainly contributed to this, meaning that undertaking some form of mobility was an essential part of the performance of any and all cult activities associated with it. But even more significantly, the varied experiences of mobility that this entailed resulted in the production of multiple, temporally-specific senses of religious place. Worshippers of Diana undertook a host of personal and communal journeys with different companions and diverse goals, as well as engaging in a range of activities once they had reached her sanctuary. There were also differences in the composition of the two mobile communities described here, not to mention amongst the many other individual visitors who, although more difficult to identify, must have made their way to the site on other occasions and for other purposes. Their own activities and agency produced still more understandings of religious place associated with Diana Nemorensis.

Into the woods at Pantanacci, Lanuvium

Exploring other sites in the region of Latium where evidence for the performance of parallel ritual activities can be detected makes it possible to confirm that the phenomenon outlined for Nemi was not unique. A useful point of comparison can be found only a short distance away: a cave in the forested area of Pantanacci, 1.5 kilometres outside the urban limits of the Latin city of Lanuvium (home to the more well-known temple of Juno Sospita) and approximately 33 kilometres south west of Rome. Discovered in 2012, when the Guardia di Finanza successfully thwarted a clandestine excavation intended to supply the antiquities market, the cave is one of several natural cavities opening into a cliff edge.[38] Within the cave, spring water emerges spontaneously from fissures in the rock, running down the walls before being collected in a small pool (possibly intentionally, perhaps for therapeutic purposes), with large slabs of stone laid down in places to level the floor.[39] That the interior of the cave was used for votive activities is confirmed by the deposition of a series of ceramic items of different types, dating primarily to a period between the fourth and second centuries BCE, placed in small natural cavities and artificial niches or on flat stones and tiles set on the ground close to the walls.[40] No objects were found in the area filled by the pool. Evidence for burning was detected on the walls and on some tiles and stones, along with the remains of nuts, peas, shellfish, poultry and sheep, suggesting that foodstuffs were offered to the divine alongside the more durable objects.[41] Amongst the latter, 33% of the assemblage studied to date

comprises impasto and black-glazed ware ceramic vessels, including small cups and miniature *skyphoi*, as well as a large quantity of terracotta anatomical votives.[42] Amongst the terracotta items, nearly all known types of anatomical model were represented, except for eyes, with a high proportion of uteri (8%), statuettes (7%) and male heads (5%), as well as an unusual set of oral cavities (4%).[43] Significantly, unlike most votive offerings, including those from Nemi, which were cleared away from their primary place of deposition (sometimes for reburial in pits called *favissae* or *stipes*), these objects remain in situ, making it possible to investigate the nature of the ritual activities in which they were implicated. In particular, the excavators noted a tendency for some items to be stacked together, something that was achieved by placing one inside the concave cavity of another before they were sealed with a fine clay.[44] This suggests either that worshippers returned to the cave on multiple occasions to make additional offerings, or that dedicants interacted directly with the dedications made by previous visitors. The latter may have served to create or formalise a sense of belonging to a wider transitory group, not only of worshippers of the same deity, but of people who had made a similar journey to the cave in order to engage in comparable activities. The range of anatomical votives is too broad to indicate whether the divinity (or divinities) with whom visitors to the cave communicated was associated with a particular aspect of well-being, health, fertility or the life-course. Indeed, the assemblage reflects a situation familiar from many others of mid and late Republican date: an unknown deity (or deities) petitioned and thanked for assistance, good fortune and protection by a range of male, female, and perhaps young and old individuals of varied status and place of origin. As at Nemi, mobile behaviours are therefore attested at Pantanacci in a secondary form, through the objects that people left behind after a temporary visit to that location.

However, certain people travelled to the cave at Pantanacci for other reasons too. Amongst the excavated artefacts are four large pieces of peperino stone (a type of granite) shaped into drums approximately 30 cm in diameter and carved with a scale-like pattern.[45] Dated tentatively to the third century BCE, and thus contemporary with the votive dedications, the blocks do not attach directly to one another, although it has been suggested that they were originally held together by a metallic band fixed into a spiral groove.[46] The stones have been interpreted as the fragmented remains of a cult statue depicting a 3–4 metre long serpent.[47] This is not an insignificant find for a grotto-like cave in the vicinity of Lanuvium, which was a centre described in Roman texts as the location for ceremonies involving processions of

young women taking bread offerings to a serpent who dwelt in cave in a sacred wood dedicated to Juno Sospita (note that Aelian confuses Lavinium with Lanuvium):

> ‘Lanuvium has enjoyed from of old the protection of an ancient serpent (an hour spent here on so infrequent a visit is well worth while). Where the sacred slope is reft by a dark chasm, at that point the offering to the hungry serpent makes its way—maiden, beware of all such paths—when he demands his annual tribute and hurls hisses from the depths of the earth. He seizes the morsel held out to him by the virgin: the very basket trembles in the virgin’s hands. Maidens sent down to such a rite turn pale when blindly entrusting their hand to the serpent’s lips. If they have been chaste, they return to embrace their parents, and the farmers cry: “It will be a fruitful year”.’ (Propertius 4.8.3–14, trans. G.P. Goold)

> ‘It seems that one peculiarity of snakes is their faculty of divination. At any rate in the town of Lavinium [Lanuvium], which is in Latium—it is so named after Lavinia the daughter of Latinus at the time when he fought as an ally of Aeneas against the people called Rutulians and overcame them. And Aeneas of Troy, son of Anchises, founded the aforesaid town; and it might be, in a manner of speaking, the grandmother of Rome, because it was from Rome that Ascanius, the son of Aeneas and Creüsa the Trojan, set out to found Alba, and Rome was a colony of Alba.—Well, there is a sacred grove in Lavinium [Lanuvium] of wide area and thickly planted, and nearby is a shrine to Hera of Argolis. And in the grove there is a vast and deep cavern, and it is the lair of a Serpent. And on certain fixed days holy maidens enter the grove bearing a barley-cake in their hands and with their eyes bandaged. And divine inspiration leads them straight to the Serpent’s resting-place, and they move forward without stumbling and at a gentle pace just as if they saw with their eyes unveiled. And if they are virgins, the Serpent accepts the food as sacred and as fit for a creature beloved of god. Otherwise the food remains untasted, because the Serpent already knows and has divined their impurity. And ants crumble the cake of the deflowered maid into small pieces so that they can be carried easily, and transport them without the grove, cleansing the spot. And the inhabitants get to know what has occurred and the maidens who came in are examined, and the one who has shamed her virginity is punished in accordance with the law. This is the way in which I would demonstrate the faculty of divination in serpents.’ (Aelian *On animals* 11.16, trans. A.F. Scholfield)

The eventual fate of the maidens in these passages might rest with different agents (either the serpent itself or the human community), but both recount a ritual connected with fertility. If the snake accepted the offering there would be future prosperity, but if the maiden making that offering was impure the serpent would reject it and a bad harvest would follow.[48] For centuries scholars have sought to identify the location of the cave described in these accounts, sometimes reluctantly assuming that the substructures of the urban temple of Juno Sospita must have acted as an artificial cave for the performance of these longstanding rites.[49] The discovery of the Pantanacci cave, with the remains of what appears to be the image of a giant serpent in an area which retains the toponym 'Dragonello' or 'Stragonello' (derived from *draco*), does not provide definitive proof that this was where these rites were performed but it seems very likely.[50]

As a result, the evidence from Pantanacci demonstrates a situation that is not dissimilar from that at Nemi, with at least two different groups of individuals making, in this case, relatively localised journeys in order to perform periodically discrete rituals. The physical location visited by both the dedicants of votive objects and the (ever-changing group of) young women involved in the annual fertility procession remained much the same, but the religious place produced by those participants and their actions at discrete moments in time was always context-specific and unique. For the former, place was produced through, and experienced in relation to, spontaneously periodic acts of mobility that were motivated by personal thanksgiving and embodied concerns about one's own well-being and fortunes, as well as the maintenance of an individual relationship with the supernatural world. On the other hand, more formal yet still episodic mobility was a central element of the appeasement of the serpent, and for the women involved in that procession must have produced a sense of religious place that embodied the concerns of the wider community of the city as well as affirming their own place within its society. We can only speculate about how a woman involved in both activities at discrete moments in her life-course steered a course through these alternative time-space experiences to produce yet another complex and multi-layered understanding of the Pantanacci cave as sacred place.

The successful completion of both sets of activities and the production of religious place for each depended upon behaviours that were profoundly mobile in nature. Even if, in both of the instances outlined here, the journey between city and cave was comparatively short and unlikely to have proved especially arduous, as an experience this movement was crucial for

producing a deeply embodied sense of place. Participants moved from an urban to an extra-urban setting, from a built environment to a natural one, with all the attendant sensory implications that come with moving through dense woodland, replete with its distinctive organic scents and sounds, the cool dappled light and shade of the trees and, eventually, the chill darkness of the cave and the moving reflection of flames on the water of its pool. As noted above for late medieval English contexts, mobile behaviours such as these could be important for the way in which they 'mapped the familiar,' creating a layered local geography of sacred place that was produced through lived experiences of diverse types of movement between geospatially separate and architecturally distinct locations. In the case of the serpent ritual, for example, mobile behaviour could simultaneously communicate and embody, yet also repeatedly sustain and rework, the spatial relationship between religious place as experienced as a whole community at the urban monumentalised temple, and as a more select group, with an altered annual composition, at the extra-urban grotto. In other words, this was a relationship that became momentarily tangible only through the moving bodies of ritual participants and which itself remained in a constant process of 'becoming' or in need of perpetual, if periodic, affirmation.

Conclusions

According to Richard Scriven (2014, 255) 'Through the combination of prioritising movement, connecting meanings and experiences, and recognising the mutual roles of the mobile and the fixed, we can enhance our insights into pilgrimage.' This paper has sought to put this argument into practice, arguing that more nuanced understandings of the significance of ancient religious practice and place emerge when the dynamic behaviours that underpin pilgrimage activities are examined in new ways. When approached from a traditional perspective it might appear anachronistic to attempt to connect pilgrimage (ostensibly about movement) with the concept of place (customarily characterised by the absence of movement). However, as this chapter has shown, a more critical approach that advocates a move away from understandings of place that are based on definable sets of structures, towards understandings of place as the product of dynamic 'time-space events', makes it possible to recognise the powerful complexities of the locations at which religious activities were performed, such as the cave at Pantanacci and the lakeside sanctuary of Diana. What emerges as a result, is the impression of geospatial locations that gained significance as religious place through a series of periodically repeated but always unique cumulative movements. The consequent prospect of a religious landscape comprised of overlapping,

effectively intangible and short-lived places produced by pilgrimage behaviours, conjures a panorama of mobility that is difficult to map in traditional ways and which will never align with attempts to plot the location of 'great pilgrimage centres'. Perhaps this is why pilgrimage has proved to be so ungraspable for Roman Italy and thus has appeared to be less significant than in other cultural contexts.

Rather than seeking to define and then identify secure instances of pilgrimage to sites within Republican Latium, the discussion above has sought to demonstrate how the types of activities that pilgrimage involves, in particular its dependence upon episodic acts of movement and the mobility of individuals and groups, could be integral to the production and experience of religious place during this period. From this perspective, rather than pilgrimage representing a special or discrete aspect of religious practice in early Roman Italy, it can thus be better understood as a set of behaviours that provided a sustaining foundation for many of the ordinary activities that were performed as part of Roman religious practice. In turn, this might also go some way to explaining why 'pilgrimage' does not stand out in the evidence for Roman religious practice in the way that it does for other ancient contexts and, moreover, why the Latin/Roman community of Italy felt no need to coin a particular term for it.[51] The absence of evidence for the forms of pilgrimage with which we are familiar from other contexts, both past and present, need not therefore indicate that it did not exist, did not occur very frequently, or that it was considered unimportant, but that it simply did not need to be identified as a type of behaviour that was in some way different, special or otherwise significant. Instead, the significance of 'pilgrimage' in this period and region lay in the behaviours at its heart and, as demonstrated here, at least in part, in the role it played in the production of religious place.

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[1] For example, McCorriston 2011; Rutherford 2013; Kristensen and Friese 2017.
[2] Exceptions include Kiernan 2012; Grünewald 2017; Stevens 2017.
[3] Kristensen and Friese 2017.
[4] For critiques see Kiernan 2012, 79–80; Friese and Kristensen 2017, 3.
[5] For geographical approaches see Urry 2002; Slavin 2003; Scriven 2014. For anthropological, sociological and religious studies approaches see Eade and Sallnow 1991; Morinis 1992; Holloway 2003; Coleman and Eade 2004; Bowie 2006, 237–59; Rountree 2006.
[6] Turner 1974; Bowie 2006, 240; Kinnard 2014.
[7] Elsner and Rutherford 2005; Kiernan 2012, 79.
[8] For example, Kiernan 2012; Friese and Kristensen 2017, 1–3; Bremmer 2017.
[9] Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 2–4.
[10] Elsner and Rutherford 2005, 12–30; McCorriston 2011; 2017.
[11] On lived religion see McGuire 2008; Rüpke 2016.
[12] Comella 1981; Graham 2017; forthcoming.
[13] Recke 2013; Flemming 2016; Graham and Draycott 2017; Graham 2017; Hughes 2017
[14] Coarelli 1987; Buchholz 2013.
[15] Edlund 1987; Stek 2009.
[16] Scopacasa 2014; Crawford 2011, 1203, no. Teruentum 34.
[17] Graham forthcoming.
[18] Rohl 2015, 6; see also Edensor 2000; Ingold 2004; Thrift 2004; Phillips 2005; Biehl 2007; Moser and Feldman 2014; Scriven 2014; Knott 2015.
[19] See also Scriven 2014, 256–57.
[20] For example, Kinnard 2004, xi–xiv.
[21] Also Knott 2015, 29.
[22] Cato *Origines* 2; Blagg 1985; Green 2007.
[23] Blagg 1985; Green 2007; Ghini and Diosono 2012a.

[24] Blagg and MacCormick 1983, 22; Hughes 2016.
[25] Blagg and MacCormick 1983, 46–53.
[26] Ghini and Diosono 2012a, 271 and 274.
[27] Ghini and Diosono 2012a, 272–73 and 275.
[28] Diosono, Romagnoli and Batocchioni 2013.
[29] Ghini and Diosono 2012b, 130.
[30] Ghini and Diosono 2012b, 130; Servius *ad Aen*. 6.136.
[31] Green 2007, 3; Ghini and Diosono 2012b, 121.
[32] On the crater's microclimate: Green 2007, 6–7.
[33] Green 2007, 62; this has also been suggested for pilgrimage sites in other parts of Roman Europe: Kiernan 2012; Grünewald 2017.
[34] Graham 2017; forthcoming.
[35] For the wider importance of nature in the production of place see Graham 2018.
[36] Blagg 1986, 214.
[37] For example, Eade and Sallnow 1991; Bowie 2006, 242.
[38] Attenni 2013; Attenni et al. 2013; Attenni and Ghini 2014; 2017; Hermans 2016.
[39] Attenni and Ghini 2014, 155–57.
[40] Attenni 2013, 6.
[41] Attenni 2013, 6.
[42] Attenni and Ghini 2017, 63; Attenni 2017, 29 reports a total of at least 1500 terracotta votives, but only 1020 of all of the objects from the cave, including both ceramic vessels and terracotta votives, have been studied at the time of writing.
[43] Attenni and Ghini 2014, 158, fig. 9.
[44] Attenni and Ghini 2014, 156.
[45] Attenni 2015; Attenni and Ghini 2017, 66–67.
[46] Attenni and Ghini 2014, 157–58.
[47] Attenni and Ghini 2014, 158; Attenni 2015, 36; Hermans 2016; Attenni and Ghini 2017, 66.
[48] See Attenni 2015, 36.
[49] Hermans 2016.
[50] Attenni and Ghini 2017, 67.
[51] See Bremmer 2017, 277–78.